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KETTLE FALLS

LAUNCHED in 1900, the Kettle Falls Hotel was the first hotel in the area. It was built on the site of the old Kettle Falls Hotel, which was destroyed by fire in 1900. The new hotel was built on the same site and has since become a landmark in the area.



REACHED through Lake Kabetogama just 25 miles from Gappa's Landing. A beautiful scenic boat trip over one of the most beautiful lakes in the entire north country. Enjoy the peace and quiet of this unique resort.

The Kettle Falls Hotel

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Launch service will be maintained throughout the summer months 2 to 5 times per week.

COMFORTABLE BEDS

EXCELLENT MEALS



Fishing

The Kettle Falls hotel is a ideal sound structure and the surrounding lakes offer a paradise to the fisherman and sportsman. Pike fishing is good here throughout the entire season. Long experience has taught Mr. Williams what the out door will do for the fisherman's appetite and the meals are all that could be desired. Fish dinners here are a treat not soon forgotten.

Whether you stay a day, week or month you will find this territory beautiful, restful and positive's fascinating.

RESTFUL

HEALTHFUL

OWNED AND OPERATED BY R. S. WILLIAMS

Historic Furnishings Report

VOYAGEURS

KETTLE FALLS HOTEL

National Park / Minnesota



APPROVED:

Don Castleberry
Regional Director, Midwest Region

February 18, 1988


HISTORIC FURNISHINGS REPORT

KETTLE FALLS HOTEL
VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK
International Falls, Minnesota

by

David H. Wallace

Harpers Ferry Center
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report on the furnishings and functions of the various rooms in the Kettle Falls Hotel could not have been written without the active cooperation of several members of the Williams family whose collective memory covers the hotel's history from 1918 to the present. Taped interviews (1978 and 1982) with Charlie and Blanche Williams and three of their children--June Dougherty and Mike and Chuck Williams--are the prime source of information on what life at Kettle Falls was like, particularly after 1956. During my visit to Voyageurs National Park in July 1987, I had the benefit of a tour of the hotel and falls area under the knowledgeable guidance of Chuck Williams, the current concessioner. Mr. Williams also provided free access to the Kettle Falls Hotel collection stored in several buildings at Kettle Falls while hotel renovation is under way. At a subsequent meeting with Charlie and Blanche Williams, Mike Williams, and June Williams Dougherty, I received answers to many questions about the furnishings and permission to copy and use in this report a number of family snapshots not previously seen by researchers. For their willing assistance in this project, I wish to acknowledge my deep gratitude.

I am beholden also to the superintendent and staff of Voyageurs National Park for information and support services, which have facilitated preparation of this report. In particular, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Mary Graves, cultural resource management specialist, and Catherine Wuvcha, summer intern, for their assistance in inventorying and photographing the hotel furnishings in storage at Kettle Falls and in bringing to my attention historical material in the park files and at the Koochiching County Public Library and the Koochiching County Historical Museum.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

PRIOR PLANNING DOCUMENTS

"Master Plan for the Proposed Voyageurs National Park," 1968.

"Voyageurs National Park Survey of Historical Structures," by John Hackett and Liza Nagle, 1975.

IDLCS: 09288, Management Category B: should be preserved. Added to the National Register on January 11, 1976.

"Interpretive Prospectus," June 1981.

"Historic Structure Report, Kettle Falls Hotel and Associated Facilities," by Architectural Resources, Inc., December 1981.

HISTORICAL DATA

INTRODUCTION

The Kettle Falls Hotel is located at the eastern extremity of the Kabetogama Peninsula in Voyageurs National Park, about 50 miles east of International Falls, Minnesota. It is accessible only by water. Privately owned until its purchase by the National Park Service in 1977, the hotel continued to operate under a concession agreement with the former owners. The hotel was closed and emptied of its furnishings in 1986 to permit exterior restoration and interior adaptation by the National Park Service. It is scheduled to reopen as a concessioner-operated hotel in the late spring of 1988.

This report documents the history of the hotel furnishings during the period of private ownership (from 1910 to 1977) and provides some guidelines for the concessioner and the park administration in regard to use, interpretation, and preservation of the surviving furnishings. An inventory of hotel furnishings stored in various buildings at Kettle Falls in 1987 is on file at park headquarters.

The history of the Kettle Falls area is covered in considerable detail in the "Historic Structure Report: Kettle Falls Hotel and Associated Facilities," prepared for the National Park Service by Architectural Resources, Inc., Duluth, Minnesota, December 1981. The following section of this report presents a condensed, two-part chronology of 1) ownership, and 2) structural changes in the hotel from 1910 to 1977, followed by a more detailed account of the people associated with the hotel and a room-by-room analysis of room use and furnishings.

ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC OCCUPANCY

Chronology of Ownership

1910-1918	W. Ed Rose, owner-operator
1918-1956	Robert S. and Hilma (Lil) Williams, owners and operators
1956-1961	Lil Williams, owner-operator, assisted by Charles R. and Blanche Williams
1961-1977	Charles R. and Blanche Williams, owners and operators
1977-present	U.S. National Park Service, owner; Kettle Falls Hotel, Inc., concessioner since 1977 (Michael Williams, president, 1977-1982; Charles A. Williams, president, 1982-present)

Chronology of Structural Development

1910-1915. Hotel construction occurred in three stages. Investigation of the structure during the 1986/87 renovation revealed that the hotel initially included only the east wing (lobby, dining room, bedrooms 1-10, and probably the lean-to kitchen). By 1915 the north wing had been added, comprising the barroom, storage rooms, and bedrooms 11-19. In a 1915 photograph (fig. 1), the apparent lack of paint or weathering on the porch suggests that it had just been built.¹

1915-1920. An undated early photograph shows that since 1915 the porch had been painted white and a small window for extra ventilation had

1. Information from Mary Graves, cultural resource management specialist, Voyageurs National Park; 1915 photograph in the collection of the Koochiching County Historical Museum, International Falls, Minnesota.

been added under the eaves of the kitchen. Two small trees flanked the front steps.²

1918. A 32-volt direct current electrical system introduced.³

1935. A photograph in the "1935 Tourist Edition" of The Daily Journal, International Falls, Minnesota, shows no change since the early 1920s, except that the trees had grown considerably.⁴

1938. A photograph in the "1938 Tourist Edition" of The Daily Journal shows lattice work under the porch for the first time, a fenced yard, and different trees.⁵

1942, June. A photograph (fig. 2) taken by former employee Norman Selsaas reveals several changes since 1938, including striped awnings over the bedroom windows, a canopy over the entrance steps, and flower beds but no trees in front of the hotel. A porch behind the kitchen is also visible for the first time; earlier photographs were taken too close up to show this, so its date is uncertain. This porch later became the auxiliary kitchen.⁶

2. Undated photograph, c.1920, in the collection of the Koochiching County Historical Museum.

3. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Historic Structure Report: Kettle Falls Hotel and Associated Facilities," by Architectural Resources, Inc. (December 1981), pp. 52-55 (hereafter cited as HSR).

4. The Daily Journal, International Falls, Minnesota, "1935 Tourist Edition," Koochiching County Public Library, International Falls.

5. The Daily Journal, International Falls, Minnesota, "1938 Tourist Edition," Koochiching County Public Library.

6. Original owned by Norman Selsaas, International Falls; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.

Late 1940s. Witte 110/120-volt electrical power plant installed, tied into the existing "knob and tube" wiring.⁷

1956. Witte power plant destroyed by fire, replaced by a Buda 20/25 KW power plant. Downstairs wiring replaced with Romex wiring. Plumbing installed in kitchen and a sink in the upstairs hallway. About the same time the back porch was converted into an auxiliary kitchen with walk-in cooler, and the laundry was built on the east end of the auxiliary kitchen.⁸

1961. A 10 KW Witte power plant replaced the Buda power plant. About the same time, the plumbing system was extended to provide men's and women's toilets on the first floor (in a former storage area behind the barroom) and on the second floor (formerly bedroom 15).⁹

1962. The building was reroofed.¹⁰

1964. An addition, built at the north end of the second floor, provided two shower rooms, each with a lavatory and water closet. A radio telephone was installed the same year.¹¹

1969. Witte power plant replaced with a 20KW General Motors diesel power plant.¹²

7. HSR, p. 55.

8. HSR, pp. 42, 56, 104, and 187.

9. HSR, pp. 43 and 56.

10. Blanche Williams, interview, October 9, 1982, p. 4.

11. Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, February 10, 1978, pp. 5 and 13.

12. HSR, p. 56.

1970. Part of the kitchen rewired, additional outlets provided in the lobby, and additional lighting and a gas heater installed in the bar-room.¹³

1971. Bell Telephone system installed.¹⁴

1973. Bedrooms 3 and 5 combined to provide more space for Mr. and Mrs. Williams; electric fans installed in barroom.¹⁵

1974. Second floor rewired, replacing original 1918 knob-and-tube wiring with concealed wiring, pull chain lights with switch-operated lights.¹⁶

1978. Kitchen remodelled.¹⁷

1986-1987. Whole building renovated by the National Park Service.

Owners and Occupants of the Kettle Falls Hotel, 1910-1977

Ed Rose. Of the original owner, W.E. (Ed) Rose, little is known. The tradition is that his financial backer was a well-known madam and that resident "girls" were one of the establishment's attractions. The hotel also offered food, drink, and lodging to its guests, mainly construction workers on the Kettle Falls dams (1910-13), lumberjacks, and fishermen.

13. HSR, pp. 56-57.

14. Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, 1978, p. 13.

15. June Dougherty, interview, February 12, 1978, p. 16; HSR, p. 58; Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, 1978, pp. 4-5.

16. HSR, p. 57; Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, 1978, p. 6.

17. HSR, p. 189.

In 1918 Rose, said to have been suffering from tuberculosis, sold the hotel property to Robert S. Williams for \$1,000 and four barrels of whiskey.¹⁸

Bob and Lil Williams. Robert Sloan Williams, born on May 15, 1879, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, moved as a young man to Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. He was a chef at the Palmer House in Chicago before settling in Ranier, Minnesota, in 1910. There he operated a hotel and nightclub. In 1918 he took over the Kettle Falls Hotel as a supplemental source of income.

Williams married twice. His first wife was a divorcee with one son, Charles, who took his stepfather's name. After her death, Bob Williams married Hilma (Lil) Marie King in 1921.¹⁹

Bob Williams' main source of income was a nightclub in the town of Ranier, which operated year-round. The hotel at Kettle Falls was open only from late spring to early fall, and its operation was primarily Mrs. Williams' responsibility. She did most of the cooking herself. An advertisement in 1938 called particular attention to her talent in this regard: "Long experience has taught Mrs. Williams what the outdoors will do for the fisherman's appetite and the meals are all that could be desired. Fish dinners here are a treat not soon forgotten."²⁰

18. Charles R. Williams, interview, August 16, 1976; Mary Lou Pearson and Frank Ackerman, "Kettle Falls Hotel: North Woods Rendezvous," unpublished paper read before the Minnesota Historical Society, October 1979, pp. 5-6.

19. Obituary of Robert S. Williams, Daily Journal, International Falls, Minnesota, July 2, 1956; Ron Schara, "Out-of-the-Way Inn," Minneapolis Tribune, no date, quoted in Pearson and Ackerman, "Kettle Falls Hotel," p. 10; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 20.

20. "1938 Tourist Edition," Daily Journal, International Falls, June; Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 6.

"Grandma Lil," as she was known to a later generation, ran the hotel from the 1920s to the mid-1950s with the help of "various characters" whom her granddaughter has described as "funny people, maybe some of them were bad people, I guess...but colorful people."²¹

Even after the dam workers and lumberjacks had passed from the scene by the mid-1930s, Kettle Falls still attracted a primarily male clientele whose goings on were not always suitable for the eyes and ears of children.

I wanted to work up there when I was a teenager, [says her granddaughter, speaking of the late 1940s and early 1950s] and she wouldn't let me. I thought she thought I was lazy, but I guess there were things going on that she didn't feel that I should be there, which I was never aware of; it was always discreet, whatever went on....²²

Lil Williams did not much like women guests, as she felt "maybe they'd be criticizing or snooping," but with the men she could be relaxed and informal.²³

Bob Williams spent most of his time running his night club in Ranier. During prohibition years (from 1920 to 1933) he also operated a number of stills and a distribution network for his own and smuggled liquor from Canada. Several large Red Wing stoneware jugs from one of the still sites are in the Voyageurs National Park collection.²⁴

Soon after Bob Williams' death at 77 on June 30, 1956, a new era began at Kettle Falls Hotel. Although Lil Williams carried on for a few more years as owner-operator, her health began to fail in 1958. She died in

21. Dougherty, interview, p. 6.

22. Ibid., p. 20.

23. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, pp. 27-28.

24. Pearson and Ackerman, "Kettle Falls Hotel," pp. 12-13.

Florida on August 10, 1961, leaving the hotel to her foster son and daughter-in-law Charles R. and Blanche Jespersen Williams, who had been helping operate the hotel since the 1956 season.²⁵

Charlie and Blanche Williams. When Blanche and Charlie Williams began helping Lil Williams at Kettle Falls Hotel during the summer of 1956, they had been married for nearly 25 years. Their oldest child, June, was already married to Bill Dougherty; their first child was born the day Grandpa Bob died that summer. Peggy Ann, aged four, was the youngest of Charlie and Blanche's six children. Between her and June were four boys -- Dale (Bucko), 22; Robert (Robbie), 20; Michael (Mike), 10; and Charles A. (Chuck), 8.

From 1956 to 1961, Blanche Williams helped her mother-in-law cook and manage the hotel and gradually took charge as Lil's health failed. Charlie, employed at the paper mill in International Falls, came out weekends; in 1957 and 1962, after back surgery, he spent the summer with the family at Kettle Falls.

With Lil Williams' death in 1961, ownership of the hotel passed to Charlie and Blanche. Four years later, Charlie Williams was appointed keeper of the dam at Kettle Falls and retired from the mill. Thereafter, until 1977, Charlie and Blanche operated the hotel, with help from family and a few hired employees. Blanche's sister, Margaret Casey, came up weekends to do the laundry. June and Bill Dougherty came up to help most weekends and the younger Williams children and other relatives, including Harold Jespersen and Sherry Casey Stemm, were also pressed into service. Hired help tended to change from season to season, although some employees, like Jean Matson and Judy Leighton in the late 1950s and early 1960s, returned for several seasons.²⁶

25. Blanche Williams, interview, 1978, p. 3.

26. Ibid., pp. 2-4, 9-10, 12; family comments on draft report.

Under the management of Blanche and Charlie Williams the old hotel began to take on a more up-to-date look. Indoor plumbing and a more adequate lighting system, improved kitchen equipment, gas heaters and electric fans, and carpeted floors in the dining room and lobby all contributed to the comfort and convenience of owners and guests alike. At the same time, a strong effort was made to preserve the flavor of earlier days in the furnishings and in the menu. Sport fishermen still predominated among the guests, but more couples and mixed groups began to turn up. On a busy weekend in the 1960s there might be as many as 190 people for Sunday dinner and every room occupied for the weekend. Fishing, of course, was the main attraction, but the bar, in Blanche's words, "always made a good living."²⁷

Kettle Falls depended less on commercial advertising to attract customers than on the good word passed by satisfied customers to their friends. A high proportion of guests were repeaters, some for as many as thirty seasons. These visitors tended to cherish the hotel's nostalgic, somewhat raffish atmosphere, particularly the wildly uneven floors and sagging joists, which earned it in later years the nickname, "the tiltin' Hilton."²⁸

Charlie and Blanche, having sold the hotel in 1977 to the National Park Service, decided to retire at the end of that season. As in years past, they celebrated with a "closing party."

People that we invited [explains Blanche Williams] were people from the other resorts because they sent us business all the time and it was a way to show our appreciation. We used to have all the stuff that was left, and I would invite them if they wanted to come Friday night and stay through Saturday night and leave Sunday. Oh, we used to have the best parties.... It was just a lot of fun.²⁹

27. Ibid., pp. 8 and 29.

28. Ibid., pp. 26-27; poster, Kettle Falls Hotel collection.

29. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, pp. 29-31.

National Park Service. After the National Park Service acquired Kettle Falls Hotel as part of Voyageurs National Park, it continued to be operated by the Williams family under a concession agreement. From 1978 to 1982 Mike Williams was the concessioner; since 1982 his brother Chuck Williams has held the concession.

The hotel was closed in 1986 to permit renovation and exterior restoration by the National Park Service. It is scheduled to reopen in May 1988.

EVIDENCE OF ROOM USE AND FURNISHINGS, 1910-1986

This section presents the historical evidence on a room-by-room basis. Room names are those commonly used by the Williams family. Room numbers (in parentheses) are those assigned in the "Historic Structure Report" (see Base Information Floor Plans, pages 9-10, reproduced on pages 14 and 15).

Porch (101, West Porch; 104, East Porch)

As originally built about 1915, the screened porch extended across the south front of the hotel from the barroom to the dining room. The front steps, east of center, were originally uncovered, but since the mid-1930s have been roofed over.¹ Sometime after 1961 the porch was divided into two sections.

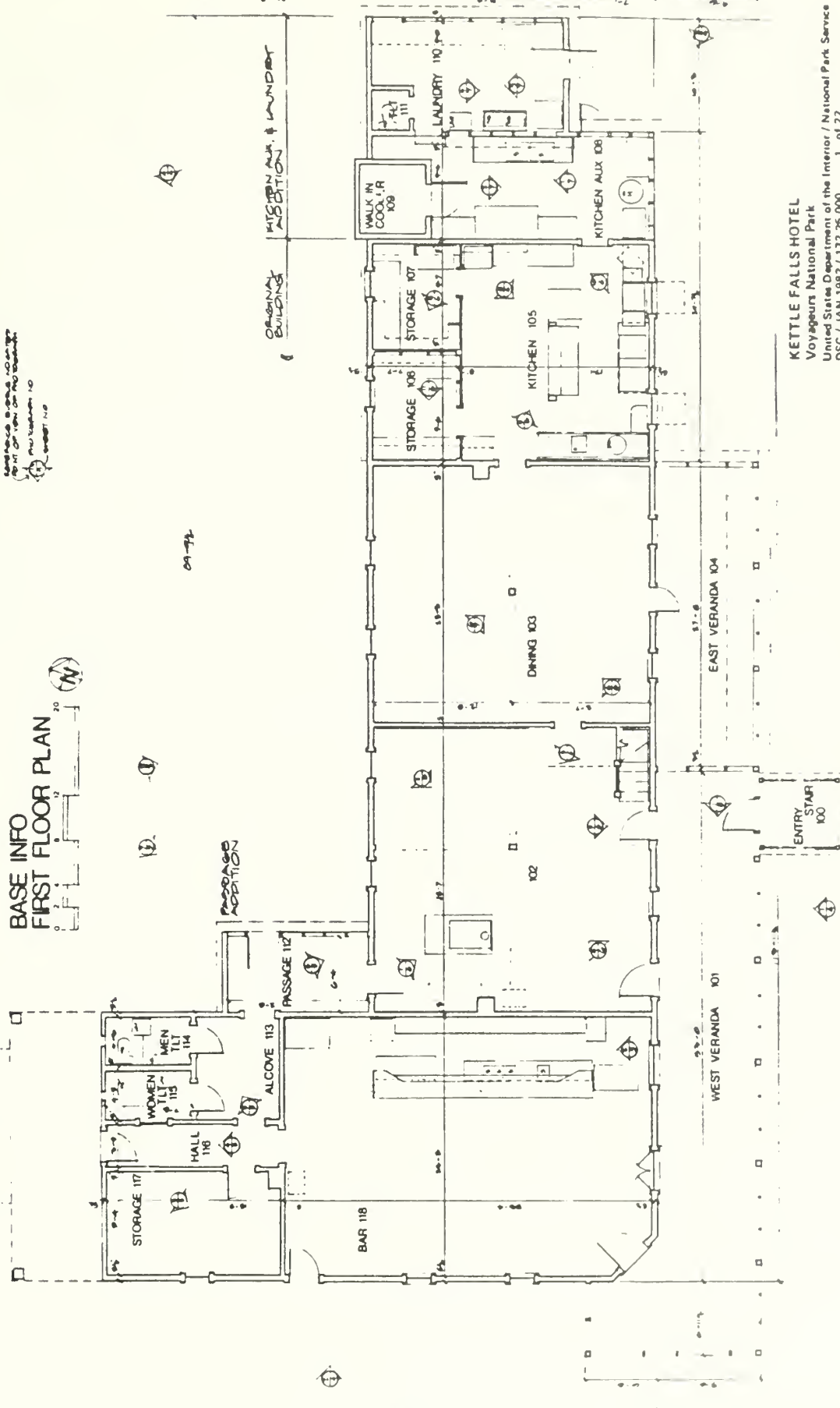
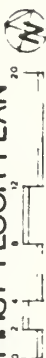
...when you walk in the hotel...to the left you go toward the bar; to the right there is a half wall with a screen and a dining area. At one time that was just all porch where people could sit, but... they always wanted to be down near the bar end of it. They needed more room for serving people, so they made [the east] part of it into a dining room.²

The east end of the porch before the division appears in 1942 and 1961 photographs (figs. 3 and 4) when it was still used as a place to sit and talk. The later dining function is illustrated in a 1986 photograph (fig. 6). The west half of the porch appears in photographs taken in 1961 and 1986 (figs. 4 and 5). In postcard photographs from the 1960s and 1970s (not illustrated) and 1977 photographs in the "Historic Structure Report," vines, probably Virginia creeper, covered the porch.

1. They are uncovered in the "1935 Tourist Edition" of the International Falls Daily Journal and covered in the "1938 Tourist Edition."

2. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 21.

BASE INFO
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



KETTLE FALLS HOTEL
Voyageurs National Park
United States Department of the Interior / National Park Service
DSC / JAN 1982 / 172 25,000 1 of 22

According to Mrs. Dougherty, these were sometimes cut back. "That would upset my mom," she says, "but they always come back. They keep it cool and... it's such a pleasant feeling."³

Finishes. As far back as anyone remembers, the walls, ceiling, and wood trim were painted white, the floor was gray.⁴

Furnishings. In 1942 (fig. 3) the east end of the porch was furnished with mission-style armchairs, including a rocker, and at least two rustic chairs. A shelf on the wall held three unidentifiable plants in earthenware pots. A strip of matting 3 or 4 feet wide partially covered the floor down the center. A striped awning, inside the screen, was probably discarded later when vines provided plenty of shade.⁵

In a photograph taken about 1961 (fig. 4) at least two wicker armchairs can be seen, but the photograph is too dark to make out other pieces of porch furniture.⁶ A small, hand-lettered sign, with an arrow pointing to the "Bar Room" is on the wall to the right of the lobby door; an unidentifiable small poster hangs on the wall next to it.

A photograph from 1986 (fig. 6) shows the east porch furnished as a dining area, with two square and one round table and 15 or 16 assorted

3. Postcards, undated, Kettle Falls Hotel collection; HSR, pp. 3, 6, 14; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 21.

4. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 22; Charlie Williams, interview, July 10, 1987.

5. None of these pieces appear to be among the surviving Kettle Falls Hotel furnishings, owned by the concessioner.

6. The two wicker chairs, or ones very like them, have survived; see Inventory, Section II.

wooden chairs. The tables are covered with gingham checked tablecloths (possibly plasticized). The two overhead lights have suspended diffusers. The floor is bare.⁷

The west end of the porch in 1977 and in 1986 (fig. 5) was furnished with a mixture of old and new chairs in rustic wood, wicker, leather (or vinyl), and steel-and-plastic. A large rustic armchair with the name Olaf carved into the crest rail harks back to the 1920s or 1930s when "Big Olie" was a bartender in Williams' Night Club in Ranier.⁸ Two wicker chairs and a wicker settee, painted two shades of green, probably date from the same period. The leather or vinyl overstuffed chairs and sofa could date from the 1950s while the steel and plastic chairs were probably acquired in the 1960s or early 1970s.⁹ As June Dougherty put it in 1978:

They have wicker chairs out there, but some of them have fallen apart through the years but they have been there as long as I can remember. There is some new furniture out there. But you have people using furniture, it wears.

She remembered particularly a wicker couch that was later thrown out and burned.¹⁰

On the wall between the barroom windows there was a modern public telephone, in a simulated cut-away barrel, and a collection of old logging tools. As at the east end of the porch, there were two overhead light fixtures with suspended diffusers. The floor was bare.¹¹

7. The furniture is in the Kettle Falls collection. The overhead light fixtures were discarded when the hotel was undergoing renovation in 1986.

8. Concessioner's collection; family interview, 1987; HSR, p. 14.

9. All in the concessioner's collection.

10. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 22; family interview, 1987.

11. The old logging tools are in the concessioner's collection; the overhead lights were discarded in 1986; the telephone booth's disposition is not known.

Lobby (102)

Unless he headed straight for the barroom on the left, a hotel guest's first stop would be the lobby, directly ahead of him as he came up the steps onto the porch. Here he would sign the guest register and arrange for his room and meals, then head up the stairs in the southeast corner to his assigned bedroom.

The lobby's other function (reflected in its alternate name: "lounge") was to serve as a pre- and post-mealtime (or rainy day) gathering place where guests could talk, sing around the upright piano, listen to records on the old Victrola, watch television (from the early 1960s), or play cards.¹

The lobby afforded direct access to the dining room but not to the barroom, which could be reached only by going out on the porch or through a covered passage (a later addition to the building) on the north side of the lobby.

Finishes. Walls and ceiling were painted off-white or light tan, later pale green, and finally pale yellow. Woodwork was varnished at first but later painted to match the walls. It is not known when these changes occurred.²

Utilities. As far as the family knows, the lobby was always heated by a free-standing, wood-burning barrel stove. It stood on a metal plate in the northwest quadrant of the room, with a stovepipe that reached up and across to the chimney on the west wall, about four feet away (fig. 7). Around 1970 a gas heating unit was installed, suspended from the ceiling just south of the chimney (fig. 8). The barrel stove appears to have been used occasionally even after 1970.

1. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 21; figures 7-12.

2. HSR, pp. 104-105, 189.

...the old stove in the lobby, we worry about it [June Dougherty said in 1978]. I can start a fire in it, and my mother and dad, but some people don't understand that it's old and you just don't fire it up like you did years ago. That's always been there.

The stove was later disconnected (fig. 9).³

Overhead lights before 1956 were probably naked bulbs, as in the barroom (fig. 20), but from about 1956, when the downstairs was rewired, until 1986, the lobby had four canopy-type, single-lamp, incandescent fixtures mounted on the exposed beams, with bowl-like diffusers hung by three bead chains.⁴

Furnishings. Coming into the lobby from the porch (the east door was regularly used) the visitor was immediately confronted by the registration desk (fig. 10).

The desk in the lobby has been there in the hotel as long as I [Blanche] can remember, and the first year I came up there was in 1932.... That desk had opened up and had a bedspring of some sort in it, not a coil spring, and an old mattress and that had been used as a bed. You can open it up but there's nothing there now -- the springs are gone.

Charlie Williams says that this was used as a "hideaway bed" in the Williams home near Ranier before it was brought out to the hotel.⁵

On the desk was the guest register of the moment, the latest in a series of varying styles and sizes. All of these appear to have survived,

3. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 24; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 8; HSR, illustration p. 13 ("Living Room"). This stove is in storage at Kettle Falls.

4. HSR, p. 60. These fixtures were discarded when the hotel was renovated in 1986.

5. Blanche Williams, interview, p. 24; family interview, 1987.

including the very first, a large ledger-like volume dating back to the time the hotel was built. This volume contains, as one journalist put it, "enough interesting names to occupy a history buff for most of an afternoon," although another writer "felt sure that, in years gone by, many men had declined to record their names in the register." So many later visitors have turned the pages of the old register that its binding finally gave out and was replaced in similar style.⁶

Another object of long use in the lobby was an old wind-up Victrola, bearing a manufacturer's label dated 1917. It still (1987) contains a few 78 rpm popular records from the 1940s or 1950s. The Victrola stood, in 1986, on the west wall near the back door (fig. 9).⁷

On the north wall, between the back door and the window (fig. 9), stood a turn-of-the-century upright piano, which originally belonged to Bob Williams' sister in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Later it was used in Bob and Lil's home near Rainier. They brought it out to the hotel in 1937, according to Blanche Williams. No sheet music seems to have survived, but a 1942 piano instruction book suggests that at least one of the Williams children practiced piano here during the summer.⁸

The other clearly old object in the lobby was the barrel stove, already discussed above.

6. Jay Griggs, "No Roads Lead to Kettle Falls," Daily Journal, International Falls, Minnesota, c.1976 (copy, Voyageurs National Park); Jim Kimball, "Historic Hotel in Kettle Falls Is Still Lively," Minneapolis Tribune, January 26, 1969. All the guest registers are in the possession of the concessioner. The first register has been rebound in the same style as the original covers.

7. Concessioner's collection, Kettle Falls.

8. Family interview, 1987. The piano is owned by the concessioner; in July 1987 it was undergoing restoration in Minneapolis. The piano instruction booklets are in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

Several pieces in the lobby in 1986 were clearly of pre-1945 vintage, although they may have been used elsewhere in earlier years. These include a 1921 Toledo kitchen scale, presumably used in the hotel kitchen at one time; an oak washstand from one of the bedrooms; two round, oak, pedestal tables, similar to those used in the dining room; two wash bowl and pitcher sets; and an old Singer sewing machine.⁹

Other pieces in the room in 1986 appear to date from after 1945. One of the couches (fig. 10), for instance, was identified by Blanche Williams in 1982 as one she had bought for her own home in 1948; she later brought it out to Kettle Falls and threw a cover over it to hide its worn upholstery. Others of similar or later vintage include a leather or vinyl upholstered couch and two chairs, several maple windsor chairs, one steel and plastic chair, a floor lamp, and a TV set and stand (figs. 8, 10-11).¹⁰

All four walls were rather haphazardly decorated with about 10 pictures, 4 maps of the area, an old mirror, a black bear skin, a stuffed snow goose with wings outstretched, a Finnish sauna dipper, a birch bark basket and miniature canoe (on top of the piano), and a blue enamelled water pitcher (on top of the Victrola). Most of these items date from after 1950, but the walls probably were similarly decorated in earlier years.¹¹

The row of coat hooks on the east wall (fig. 10) presumably were for the use of dining room guests.

June Dougherty said that both the lobby and dining room floors were covered with linoleum in the mid-fifties.

9. See figures 8-12. All of these pieces are in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

10. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 23; figures 8-12.

11. Figures 7-12. The bear skin (dating from 1965) and snow goose (1974) are owned by Mike Williams; the other pieces are in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

...every other day we would have to mop it and get it dry before the customers arrived. That was a problem because there was always people tramping through, so we did go to indoor carpeting which is more practical than the linoleum on the floors.¹²

Reading material for guests in the 1950s and later included the Saturday Evening Post, Life, and the National Geographic. A table with a magazine is just visible behind the draped couch in figure 8.¹³

A number of hand-lettered or printed signs near the registration desk added to the homey character of the lobby. These signs informed visitors of dining room hours and prices and warned that no animals were allowed in the hotel and that only guests were allowed upstairs.¹⁴

To summarize, the lobby in late years, and presumably in earlier years as well, was furnished with sturdy, practical pieces to serve its registration and lounge functions. As each piece wore out it was replaced, often with something discarded from the owners' own home. The result was a mixture of styles and materials spanning several decades. Pictures and objects around the fringes of the room probably changed annually and reflected current interests rather than any decorative plan. It was a room in which tired fishermen could relax at the end of a long day in a comfortable informal setting.

12. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 7-8.

13. Family interview, 1987. A magazine rack in the concessioner's house at Kettle Falls may also have been in the hotel lobby at one time.

14. Figure 10; Pearson and Ackerman, "Kettle Falls Hotel," p. 12.

Dining Room (103)

All meals were served family style in this room and, in recent years, on the adjacent east porch. Breakfast for hotel guests was served around 6:30 or 7:00, lunch about noon, and dinner after 5:00. People who were not staying at the hotel could have a meal in the dining room between noon and 5:00 p.m. Packed lunches were also available for hotel guests planning to fish all day. At its peak in the 1950s and 1960s, the hotel served Sunday dinner to as many as 190 people.¹

The Menu. Breakfast usually was served about 6:30. "Sometimes we started earlier," says Blanche Williams, "if we had it ready and they were sitting around waiting; well, you might as well get them off your hands." The breakfast menu offered scrambled or fried eggs, bacon, pancakes or french toast, syrup, jam and jelly, juice, and homemade bread. "If you were there just for two nights, you would have the same breakfast, or even for three days," according to June Dougherty, "but if you were there for longer, you would have your bacon, juice and french toast made from homemade bread one morning."²

For long-term hotel guests, "noon lunch was lighter than the evening meal," usually homemade pea soup made with a ham bone or vegetable soup or chili, with crackers or "a certain kind of Thuringer."

For lunch on Saturday...usually in warm weather it would be ham, potato salad, baked beans, homemade bread, some kind of dessert, sometimes a rice pudding or bread pudding or something on that order. If it was a cold day mother and grandma would have ham, au gratin potatoes, and always the beans with it...and some kind of a relish tray and your dessert.³

1. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, pp. 6, 8, 28; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 13-15. A sign showing dining room hours hung in the lobby next to the dining room door (fig. 10).

2. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, pp. 5-6, 28; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 12-13, 15.

3. June Dougherty, interview, pp. 13-14.

By the mid-fifties, visitors began to want lighter lunches, as Blanche Williams recalls:

We never used to serve sandwiches. Grandma Lil always used to say, "If they're hungry they'll eat a meal." She really got mad if anyone wanted a sandwich. I wanted to do as she had done because I thought she was successful. But we finally had to start serving hamburgers.⁴

Packed lunches -- "sandwiches...cookies or something" -- were always provided for those who wanted to stay out fishing all day, although many people seemed "to prefer coming in and wondering what are they going to have for lunch," according to June Dougherty.⁵

The dinner menu regularly offered three basic entrees in rotation -- fish, beef, and chicken.

If someone came up for a weekend, to stay...on Friday, they would try to have walleye pike for your Friday night dinner; if they didn't have the pike it might be roast beef, and if it was a roast beef dinner you would have mashed potatoes and a tossed salad and some kind of a vegetable and always a homemade dessert of some kind, pie quite often, in the past pineapple upside-down cake.... These later years, the desserts haven't been as elaborate as they were....

...If you had the walleye on Friday night you would have the chicken on Saturday night, with the french fries,... cottage cheese and cole slaw and pie or cake or something.... Then Sunday noon sometimes turkey. If you had chicken though [on Saturday] you wouldn't have turkey on Sunday; you wouldn't have a fowl two days in a row. If you had fish Friday,... chicken Saturday night, you might have roast beef on Sunday noon.⁶

4. Blanche Williams, interview, p. 29.

5. Ibid., p. 6; June Dougherty, 1978, interview, p. 14.

6. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 12-13.

To Mrs. Williams, Sunday afternoon meant fried chicken. "I can't eat chicken to this day," she said in 1982, after five years in retirement; "on a Sunday afternoon especially. Oh, we fried chicken and chicken and chicken!"⁷

Only in very recent years were dinner patrons offered a choice of entrees. A 1983 menu, for instance, listed walleye, white fish, shrimp, T-bone steak, chicken, and "special of the day," all broiled or fried.⁸

Finishes. Originally the walls and ceiling were painted an off-white or light tan; this was changed to pale yellow at an unknown date. The woodwork was originally stained and varnished, later painted the wall color.⁹

Utilities. Originally there was a chimney at the east end of the hotel (fig. 2), which ran up the east wall of the dining room, but this appears to have been closed off before 1942 (fig. 2). The chimney breast remained in the dining room but there is no evidence that it served a heating stove within living memory.

Before the building was dismantled in 1986, the dining room was lighted by four 2-lamp, incandescent, canopy-type fixtures with square glass diffusers (fig. 13). These presumably dated from about 1956 when the downstairs was rewired. Earlier lighting probably consisted of four naked bulbs in porcelain lampholders.¹⁰

7. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 7.

8. Menu in Kettle Falls collection (copy, Voyageurs National Park).

9. HSR, pp. 104-105, 189.

10. HSR, p. 60.

Furnishings. In 1978, June Dougherty described the dining room as having remained basically "the same" over the years. This was particularly true of the heavy oak tables, some round, some square, some dating back to the hotel's early years, some more recent. "They got a new dining table at home," as Mrs. Dougherty put it, "and, I think, brought the old one to Kettle Falls." Some tables also had tops made of Insulite, a pressed wood material produced in International Falls.¹¹

A special shelf, with a hole in the center, fitted around the column in the center of the room, which supports the main beam (fig. 13). This table, set a little higher than in 1986, held a pail of iced drinking water, which was ladled into water glasses.¹²

The dining room chairs in early years were wooden ones of several styles. These gradually fell apart and by the 1970s had been replaced with a set of steel and yellow vinyl restaurant chairs (fig. 13). Surviving oak or maple chairs of at least three designs were still being used in the porch dining area in 1986 (fig. 6); all three types probably pre-date the 1950s.¹³

There were two buffets (figs. 13, 15). The smaller one stood to the right of the kitchen door; it was brought out from the Williams' home farm in the 1920s. A larger buffet, probably dating from the 1930s, was brought to the hotel later and stood between the north windows.¹⁴

11. June Dougherty, interview, p. 7; HSR, illustration p. 13. Several of these tables are in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

12. Family interview, 1987. This table is in the Kettle Falls collection.

13. These chairs and the later ones are in the concessioner's Kettle Falls collection.

14. Family interview, 1987. The smaller buffet is in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls. The location of the other one is not recorded.

Around the walls hung many pictures; at least a dozen appear on three walls in 1986 (figs. 13, 15). Among them were a c.1933 photograph of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an oval-framed color photograph of Bob and Lil Williams, and a matching one of Charlie and Blanche Williams, a photograph of Bob Williams in a boat, and a very recent color print of voyageurs in a loaded canoe. Of particular interest were visitors' crayon drawings and paintings of the hotel about which June Dougherty said in 1978:

A lot of people painted or drew pictures of Kettle Falls and would give them to my grandmother or my parents. They always hung them.... A little boy [Jan Bach of Forrest, Illinois] did a crayon drawing of the hotel when he was probably ten or eleven. When he became a young man [about 1957/1958], he did another one that is beautiful and the contrast was fun to see, but someone got rid of that picture.¹⁵

As in the lobby and barroom, pictures on the walls probably were replaced frequently to make room for new acquisitions.

In the 1930s, when Norman Selsaas was working at the hotel, a mangle stood in the northeast corner of the dining room.

...their girls would mangle all the sheets and that. They would press and fold the sheets. That was all done right in the dining room. [The mangle operated] with a big crank and elbow grease.

Later the mangle was in the back porch/laundry area. This "Garland" mangle, made by Lovell Manufacturing Company, Erie, Pennsylvania, is still in the Kettle Falls collection. Sometime after 1960 a regular visitor, Harry Hafe of Milwaukee, gave Mrs. Williams an electric mangle, and the old one was put back in the lobby as decoration.¹⁶

15. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 7-8. The earlier drawing disappeared in the 1960s.

16. Norman Selsaas, interview; family interview, 1987; family comments on draft report.

As far back as June Dougherty and Margaret Casey remembered, the windows had full-length sheer curtains. By 1978 the window had a cafe curtain over the lower sash and a ruffled valance outlining the upper sash (fig. 14).¹⁷

The earliest floor covering was linoleum, replaced by carpeting after 1960 for ease of maintenance.¹⁸

Red and white checked tablecloths were on the dining tables and matching runners on the buffets in the last decade (figs. 13, 15). Earlier, white linen cloths with clear plastic covers were used.¹⁹

The dining room china, stored in the pantry, was typical, heavy duty, semi-vitreous restaurant ware. Parts of two sets survive. The earlier, green-rimmed white ware came from the Buffalo Pottery; a later, light brown ware is marked Syracuse EconoRim.²⁰

17. June Dougherty, interview, p. 7; family comments on draft report.

18. Ibid., p. 8.

19. Family comments on draft report.

20. Concessioner's collection, Kettle Falls.

Kitchen/Laundry Wing (Rooms 105-110)

Kitchen. The existence of a chimney on the east wall of what is now the dining room suggests that when the hotel was first built (1910) the east room may have been the kitchen.¹ Construction of the permanent lean-to kitchen must have followed very quickly, however, certainly before 1915 (fig. 1). The kitchen changed relatively little until 1956 when plumbing was introduced, the back porch became an "auxiliary kitchen," and a refrigerator and walk-in cooler replaced the old ice boxes. Meals were cooked on a wood stove until a gas stove was installed in 1969. Dishes were washed by hand until 1970 when a restaurant dishwasher was acquired. A major remodelling of the two kitchens took place in 1978, shortly after the National Park Service assumed ownership, and again in 1986/87.²

Mrs. Dougherty has described how wonderful it was to walk into the kitchen in Grandma Lil's time:

...we would come in and there would be the chicken cooking away and their french fries -- they always used fresh potatoes, peeled every day or every other day. They used to peel them by hand, now they have an automatic peeler, but you still have to cut them. ...and I remember fresh yellow wax beans and cottage cheese. My grandmother always served cottage cheese and it would be the large curd; the small wasn't any good she said....and then it was cole slaw...just finely chopped cabbage and then sugar and vinegar on it mixed in certain proportions....

And so it would be the cole slaw, the chicken, and then blueberry pie. Always homemade desserts at Kettle Falls.... And then if you didn't have

1. The top of this chimney can be seen at the east end of the hotel in figure 2 (c.1920) and in a photograph in the "1938 Tourist Edition" of the International Falls Daily Journal, p. 24, but by 1942 (fig. 3) the upper part of this chimney appears to have been removed. Why this chimney was taken out of service is not known.

2. HSR, pp. 42-43, 57-58, and illustrations on p. 16.

chicken there was walleye pike... prepared a special way. And then my grandfather's tartar sauce recipe ...a family secret.

...and then I'm forgetting one of the most important things is the homemade bread which was made every day. My grandmother made it and my mother makes it her way. It's such good bread; you can make that same recipe at home and it isn't the same. I think it's that water from the spring.³

The kitchen was too small and crowded to be more than a single use area for preparing meals and washing up afterwards. The only exception seems to have been a pre-breakfast gathering of hungry guests.

In the morning before breakfast there'd be men all over in the kitchen, sitting. She [Lil] didn't like that because so much talking made it hard for her to concentrate. Then when we took over I let them do as they pleased. There were a lot of men that would come out in the kitchen and sit and talk and have coffee until breakfast was ready.⁴

Lil was more tolerant later in the day, however.

The men, when she was there, after they got done eating, she told them, "Bring your dishes out to the kitchen," and a lot of those men would even help wash dishes.⁵

Utilities. Before the mid-1950s water had to be brought into the kitchen from the well outside and wood for the stove from the woodpile. "I had to keep all the kettles filled with water," Norman Selsaas recalled from the late 1930s, "so whenever they needed water I'd have to carry water, and also...you'd have to carry all the wood split for the wood stove."⁶ The wood stove provided all the heat needed on cool days.

3. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 10-11.

4. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 28.

5. Ibid.

6. Norman Selsaas, interview, 1978, p. 5.

After a gas stove replaced it in 1969, a ceiling-mounted gas unit heater was installed in the southeast corner (HSR, p. 16).

Furnishings. Between 1918 and 1986 there appear to have been only three stoves. The wood stove (figs. 15, 16) was in use until 1969, but outlasted its usefulness.

It was just falling apart.... In the last years we couldn't use the oven and we had another gas stove...out on the back porch and that's where I had to do the baking and put the chicken in there. It was kind of inconvenient because it wasn't right together.⁷

In 1969, the old wood stove was finally removed and dumped over the river bank at the end of International Dam and was later hauled away by the National Park Service. A new South Bend gas range took its place in the hotel kitchen, between the south windows. Blanche described the new range as "a nice big gas stove with a big, big grill on it."⁸ This stove served until the hotel closed for renovation in 1986. To the left (east) of the stove were three or four gas-powered deep-fryers, one in the southeast corner sitting on top of the former woodbox.⁹

There appear to have been three sinks in the main kitchen through the years, in the southwest corner.

In the beginning we had a galvanized kitchen sink. It was falling apart, so Charlie...had a friend.... made this stainless steel sink, and it fit against the [west] wall where the dishwasher is now today. It had two big compartments and it was really a beautiful sink. But we had to wash the dishes by hand.¹⁰

7. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 11.

8. Ibid.; family interview, 1987.

9. Mike Williams, sketch plan of kitchens, 1987.

10. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 10.

In 1970 they acquired a Jackson Faspray restaurant-type dishwasher, to Blanche Williams delight; "...the dishwasher, my God, that's a blessing, honestly," she said in 1982. Part of the equipment can be seen in figure 17 (1973).¹¹

In the early days, through World War II, ice boxes were the only cooling equipment. Ice cut in the winter was stored in an ice house that stood in the front yard of the hotel. Blanche Williams described it as "a refrigerator but it wasn't motorized--a long cooler-like type" in which five gallon cans of milk were kept packed in ice. The first real refrigerator, probably gas-powered, was installed in the late 1940s. As soon as the kitchen wiring was modernized in 1956, an electric refrigerator was acquired for the kitchen and a walk-in cooler was installed in the back kitchen. Two or three freezers and a milk machine were added in 1969 for use in the auxiliary kitchen and laundry.¹²

For work tables they had a long table in the center of the room with two shelves above for serving dishes, supported by two floor-to-ceiling posts; a smaller table on the east wall; and "one of the big round wooden tables" on the north side.¹³

There was "an old gray cupboard" in the northwest corner next to the dining room door. This cupboard, made for Bob and Lillian Williams, held dishes used in the dining room.¹⁴

11. Ibid., pp. 27-28. The Faspray dishwasher is in storage at Kettle Falls.

12. Blanche Williams, interview, 1978, p. 11; Norman Selsaas interview, 1978, p. 7; HSR pp. 57-58.

13. Figure 22; Mike Williams, sketch plan, 1987; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 6.

14. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 8; Mike Williams, sketch plan.

Other electrical appliances present in the two kitchens in 1978 included a compressor, an evaporator, a potato peeler, a coffeemaker, a toaster, a microwave oven, a range hood exhaust fan, and an electric can opener. All of these dated from the 1960s or 1970s.¹⁵

Photographs from the 1950s to 1980s show every available bit of wall space filled with pots and pans, utensils, pot holders and so on (figs. 15-17). Cast iron frying pans and dutch ovens figure prominently in Blanche Williams' and June Dougherty's memories of Lil Williams' famous browned and steamed chicken.¹⁶ Mrs. Dougherty's account is particularly interesting, as it shows how cooking methods changed with the times at Kettle Falls.

Grandma Lil had her way of cooking chicken and through the years my mother cooked it the same way...where they used cast iron frying pans.... They used about an inch of grease or lard and then margarine for the browning. The chicken would be in quarters and dipped in well-salted flour and then browned in this grease and then put in cast iron dutch ovens--there would be a lid in the bottom with a little water put in and the chicken covered--and then finish cooking in the hot wood stove and now in the gas stove. Nobody has chicken like that any more. Oh, a number of years ago my mother decided to try the prepared chicken. Probably five years ago [about 1973].... They bought the cooker for that and the people that come to the hotel for chicken they seem to think its fine, but I don't like it and my husband says its terrible. This last summer [1977] I talked my sister-in-law into trying the old method that Grandma Lil used to do and my mother did years ago. I said let's try it just for the hotel guests; if it's too much monkey business we don't have to do it any more.... It was a success, and they do keep the other kind for a pinch, but Mary has gone back to the old method.

15. Architectural Resources, Inc., draft report on electrical systems, March 13, 1978 (copy, Voyageurs National Park).

16. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, pp. 7-8; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 9-10.

Pantry (106). The pantry was a small room off the northwest corner of the kitchen, used primarily for storage of dishes. The east and west walls were lined with shelves, and there was a porcelain top table.

...the pantry is the same, the dishes are in the same spot.... Last summer [1977] I went into the pantry and I said where's the old table, and they said, there was something wrong with it and it was at the dump. Well, my father was very upset and an order was given to retrieve it. It wasn't anything special, one of these porcelain top....¹⁷

Fresh loaves of bread were kept in a 20-gallon Red Wing crock that stood on a homemade stool in the pantry.¹⁸

Telephone Room (107). Primarily a shelf-lined space for storage of food and other things needed in the kitchen, this little room off the northeast corner of the kitchen also housed, from 1971, the telephone equipment.

Our first phone was from over in Canada, Bell Telephone of Canada. It was kind of funny. If it was working good, it was fine, but at times you could hear every conversation. It was a party line--eight parties or eight resorts.¹⁹

In 1981 a bear got into the kitchen through the window of this room.²⁰

Auxiliary Kitchen (108). Originally a screened back porch, this space was converted into a back kitchen about 1956 (figs. 18, 19). It eventually contained a sink on the east wall, a gas water heater, potato

17. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 8.

18. Family interview, 1987. The crock and stool are in the concessioner's collection, Kettle Falls.

19. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 25; Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, 1978, p. 13.

20. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 25.

peeler, and freezer on the south wall and another freezer and a table on the west wall. In the northwest corner was a walk-in cooler (109), installed in 1956.²¹

Laundry (110). Little more than a screened porch, the laundry was built about 1956 at the same time as the auxiliary kitchen and the introduction of plumbing in the hotel. The exterior can be seen in figure 19, but there is no known interior photograph.²²

In the late 1930s they had a gas-operated Maytag washing machine, perhaps the same "wringer-type washer" that was there in the 1950s, when Blanche Williams' sister Margaret used to come up weekends to do the wash. The wash dried on long clothes lines in front of the hotel.²³

By 1978 the laundry contained two washing machines, an electric mangle, a freezer, and a toilet (111). The clothes dryers (2) were in the damkeeper's house.²⁴

21. Mike Williams, sketch plan, 1987; HSR, p. 104.

22. HSR, p. 187.

23. Norman Selsaas, interview, 1978, p. 7; Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 12.

24. Architectural Resources, Inc., draft report on electrical system, 1978; Mike Williams, sketch plan, 1987; family comments on draft Historic Furnishings Report.

Barroom (118)

The barroom wing, though not part of the original (1910) hotel structure, was added before the bartenders' picnic of 1915 (fig. 1). It has always served the same function and has always, as Blanche Williams put it, "made a good living."¹ In the early days one could get to the barroom only from the front or side porch; there was no direct access from the hotel. Probably since 1961, when the toilets were installed in a storeroom behind the barroom (114-115), a passage (112) has afforded access to the barroom from the lobby. Another storeroom (117) behind the barroom remained unchanged.

Besides drinks and some food, the barroom featured a few other forms of entertainment. A nickelodeon installed in 1927 offered popular piano music; in the hotel's last years there was also a juke box (figs. 20, 38). As early as 1956/57, there was a "bumper pool" table; a larger pool table replaced it about 1970 (figs. 22, 31). By 1986 even video games had found their way to the Kettle Falls Hotel barroom (fig. 38).²

Probably the most entertaining feature of the barroom, however, was its wildly warped floor, the result of decades of foundation settling and the freezing and thawing of the earth just under the floor.

The most amazing part of the building is its floors --good sound floors but nowhere level. You are always walking uphill, downhill or sidehill. At every point in the large bar-room the floor slopes toward the door. I guess if you roll out and can't make the climb back to a stool you've had it.³

Fond memories of this aspect of what was dubbed "the tiltin' Hilton" inspired the National Park Service to reproduce the distorted

1. Blanche Williams, interview, 1982, p. 29.

2. Family interview, 1987.

3. Kimball, "Historic Hotel," Minneapolis Tribune, January 26, 1969.

barroom floor as it was when the hotel was closed for renovation in 1986.⁴

Utilities. No heating stove is visible in the earliest (1942) photograph of the barroom (fig. 20). The next picture, taken in 1956, shows a stovepipe and a low stove, probably a "bucket-a-day" potbelly stove (fig. 23). This stove was replaced before 1961 with an oil-burning heater (figs. 27, 31), which was in turn replaced in 1970 with a ceiling-mounted gas unit heater (fig. 38).⁵

Plumbing was probably first brought into the barroom about 1961, at the same time the toilets were installed in the adjacent storeroom, an icemaker was installed in 1969. In earlier times, water and ice were brought in by hand.

I used to get up at 5:30 every morning [recalled Norman Selsaas, a former employee] when everyone else was sleeping. I'd have to clean the bar room out, go get ice and ice the beer, and the pans where they wash, I'd have to drain all the water out by hand and put fresh water in the bar room....⁶

The barroom's lighting system from 1918 to 1956 consisted of low wattage, naked, incandescent bulbs in key-type sockets hung by a twisted drop cord from ceiling-mounted wiring (figs. 20, 23). Thereafter, the barroom had keyless porcelain lampholders mounted on the ceiling with "the new G shape incandescent lamp...to replace the old A line to be more decorative" (fig. 37). Bowl-shaped diffusers were added to the lights over the bar (fig. 36), possibly about 1973 when the ceiling fans were installed.⁷

4. The phrase "tiltin' Hilton" was used on a poster (post-1980) in the concessioner's collection.

5. HSR, p. 56.

6. Norman Selsaas, interview, 1978, p. 5; HSR, p. 43.

7. HSR, pp. 53-54, 57, and illustration p. 14; Architectural Resources, Inc., draft report on electrical system, 1978.

Electric lighting here, as elsewhere in the hotel, had to be backed up with kerosene lamps for use in case of not-infrequent power outages.

Oh, there were plenty of kerosene lamps still there when I worked up there. You had some of the brackets up on the wall that held them, because if the [light] plant went to heck you could still light a kerosene lamp. They were still available to be used when I worked up there in the '30s.⁸

June Dougherty recalled her mother's saying that the light plant was "the heart of the place" because "when the light plant stops at Kettle Falls, that's it."⁹ As late as 1986, there were at least two old kerosene lanterns in the barroom (figs. 36, 38).

Electrically powered appliances in the barroom and storeroom in 1978 included an icemaker, two refrigerators, three ceiling fans, a bar cooler, and the nickelodeon and juke box.¹⁰

Furnishings. The bar visible along the east wall in the barroom photographs (figs. 21-38) probably dates from the early 1930s and came from the Williams Night Club in Ranier.¹¹ It is of the simplest construction, mainly dark-stained plywood on a pine frame, with a maple-trimmed countertop. There is no footrail. The back bar, also of pine and plywood, has many drawers for storage, a deep counter, and a high back ideal for display of pictures, cards, cartoons, and other ephemera.

At least four sets of bar stools have been used. Before 1950 they were the soda fountain type, with twisted wire frames and wooden seats. The next style, used from the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, was chrome steel

8. Norman Selsaas, interview, 1978, p. 10.

9. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 7.

10. Architectural Resources, Inc., draft report on electrical system, 1978.

11. Family interview, 1987.

with a red vinyl seat. Next came a wooden set, with red seat and back, and finally, from about the mid-1970s, chrome steel with black seat and back.¹²

Along the west wall there were three booths, each consisting of two high-backed benches and a free-standing table (fig. 37). They were in the barroom in 1942 (fig. 20) and probably all the way back to the 1930s or even 1920s. Photographs from 1942 to 1961 (figs. 20, 23, 28) show wooden armchairs in use as supplemental seating at the tables. In the late 1960s (fig. 31) a steel and plastic dining room chair was being used. The bar tables were painted gray and covered with linoleum.¹³

Made by the J.P. Seeburg Piano Company of Chicago, the electrically-operated nickelodeon is said to have been one of a pair bought in 1922 by Bob Williams. One was for his night club in Ranier, the other for the Kettle Falls Hotel, where it was installed in 1927 according to family tradition.¹⁴ Originally powered by a 32-volt motor, it was refitted with a 110/120-volt motor in 1961 when the hotel power plant was upgraded. It always sat at the north end of the room between the side porch and storeroom doors.¹⁵

A club pool or bumper pool table was installed at the south end of the barroom about 1956 (fig. 22). It was replaced about 1969 by a larger,

12. Ibid.; see also figures 23, 26, 33, 36. Only the last stools are now in the concessioner's collection.

13. Family comments on draft report. None of these chairs appears to have survived, but four of the chair legs, with their distinctive trifold feet, seem to have been used for the pantry stool on which the bread crock sat (Kettle Falls Hotel collection).

14. Charlie Williams, family interview, 1987; Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, 1978, p. 11-12.

15. Mike and Chuck Williams, interview, 1978, p. 12; Norman Selsaas, interview, 1978, pp. 3, 11; figures 20, 31, 38. The nickelodeon, recently restored and in operating condition, is in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

but not full-size, pool table manufactured by Irving Kaye Company, Brooklyn, New York (figs. 31, 34). The unevenness of the barroom floor made it necessary to block up the legs of the pool table rather dramatically (figs. 34, 36).¹⁶

Visible in a 1986 photograph (fig. 38), a juke box and a video game were evidently introduced in the 1970s or early 1980s. There was a juke box in the bar as early as the mid-1960s, according to Mike Williams.

As early as 1961, there was a Coca Cola cooler in the northeast corner (fig. 27). By the early 1970s, a large cooler advertising Dr. Pepper replaced it (fig. 34).

Like the lobby and dining room, the barroom was a veritable gallery of pictures, mounted fish and hunting trophies, posters, cartoons, printed slogans, and in its last years, men's caps.

The oldest and most popular of these decorations were the pictures known as "the girls," six color prints of nudes, probably dating from the 1930s or early 1940s (figs. 24, 34, 37, 38). "I grew up with them, they've always been there," said June Dougherty in 1978.

They were in bad shape, cracking and flaking, and my dad took them down, he was going to have them framed and it just wasn't the same without the girls, and the girls were missing for a couple of years, and then Ken Amick had them framed and they are all in their places. We wash the glass on them and people come in and comment on them and I tell them they all had baths today.¹⁷

16. Family interview, 1987. The later pool table is in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

17. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 19. These prints are in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

Another trio of "girls," though less provocative, are titled respectively "Exit," "Detour," and "Dangerous Curves" (fig. 32, top). These were part of a set entitled "Signs of the Times" by Henry Clive, published in 1934.¹⁸

There were other, mostly now unidentifiable, prints and photographs on the walls, along with a mounted deer head, a set of moose antlers, a snow shoe, a Mexican hat, several mounted fish (dating from the 1970s), a large signed photograph of Jack Dempsey (1942), and at least two paintings of the Kettle Falls barroom done by visitors.¹⁹

The back bar was a whole gallery in itself, "lined with photographs dating back through the years that the hotel has been in existence, and Charlie knows the people," reported the Mesabi Sunday News in 1972, "woodmen and Indians in the older pictures, friends and hotel guests in the recent ones."²⁰ It was a constantly changing exhibit as many photographs testify (figs. 26, 29-36).

Both a roller shade and a pair of full length flowered drapes can be seen on one of the windows in a 1961 photograph (fig. 28). In 1986 there were cafe curtains on both west windows (fig. 37).

18. Concessioner's collection, Kettle Falls. One of these prints is clearly visible in figure 44, to the left of the reclining nude.

19. See figures 20-38. The fish, deer head, and one painting of the bar are in the concessioner's collection at Kettle Falls.

20. "Kettle Falls Hotel to Survive," Mesabi Sunday News, August 6, 1972.

Second Floor

Stairs and Upstairs Hall (200, 201, 202). The stairs to the second floor went up from the southeast corner of the lobby, between the main entrance and the dining room door. The upstairs hall ran along the center of the east and north wings, ending (after 1965) in a vestibule at the north end between the two bathrooms, where an outside stairway led down to the rear of the hotel.

The hall was dimly lit with low voltage bulbs until the voltage upgrade in 1961. The original base bulbs were replaced about 1974 with "incandescent drum fixtures with opal glass diffusers."¹

Striped carpeting, similar to that in the bedrooms, was installed in the early 1970s. Before that time the hall floors were bare.²

Bedrooms. Before 1961 there were 18 bedrooms. In that year room 15 was converted into a pair of toilets and in 1973 rooms 3 and 5 were combined, leaving 16 rooms, of which 15 were available for guests.

The following evidence on the individual bedrooms is derived from an interview with June Dougherty in 1978. The rooms are listed by their historic numbers with the architect-assigned numbers in parenthesis.³

No. 1 (215). A "Little room" at the east end of the hall, south side. It contained a single bed.

No. 2 (214). Similar to No. 1, on the north side.

1. HSR, p. 60. Sherry Casey Stemm remembers going down the halls at dusk to pull the light strings for the evening (family comments on draft report).

2. HSR, p. 189 and illustration on p. 14; Mike Williams, comments on draft of this report.

3. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 16-17; HSR, p. 9.

No. 3 (216). Another single-bed room, eliminated in 1973 to permit enlargement of No. 5.

No. 4 (213). A larger room on the north side, with "two twin beds and the commode and the old dresser."

No. 5 (217). "...my grandmother's and grandfather's room and then [after 1961] my parents' room. Mother needed more room for her book-keeping and so they took No. 3 out and made No. 5 a larger room where she could have a desk and file and typewriter and whatever; it's still crowded but it is a little larger." No. 5 was next to the stairs on the south side of the hall.

No. 6 (212). A north-facing room with two twin beds.

No. 7 (218). South side, next to the stairs. "...facing the lake, that is one of the favorite rooms, the people that are coming like for a week get that room or the ones that are there longer, or certain people request that room."

No. 8 (211). A north room, "facing the back of the hotel," with two twin beds.

No. 9 (219). Mrs. Dougherty did not mention this room, which may have been less desirable, despite its view of the lake, because of its proximity to No. 11, the "hospitality room."

No. 10 (210). A north room, not mentioned by Mrs. Dougherty.

No. 11 (220). Occupying the southwest corner, this was the largest bedroom in the hotel, containing four twin beds, "a huge old dresser" and two commodes. From the 1930s to the mid-1950s, Charlie and Blanche Williams and their children were in No. 11. At other times it was rented out.

It has been called the hospitality room, the bridal suite, the hospital room. Everybody wants that room. If four men come or ten men come they want that. They use it to gather in, a lot of them have bottles in their rooms and they have a drink and talk over the day's fishing or the party the night before. Some people come to fish and some come to party and it's really nice when you just have fishermen one weekend...because the fishermen don't like to hear noise at night and you do hear the old nickelodeon and all.

No. 12 (208). North wing, east side looking out over the back of the hotel.

That was Bill, my husband's and my room for many, many years...mother always saved that for us because we would come in on weekends. Sometimes I would stay up during the week...if she needed me or I happened to feel like it or if some special customers or--they were like family really--oh, so and so's coming...he's an old friend of my grandmother's, you have to be here, she would say.

"There isn't a room No. 13 because that is bad luck."

No. 14 (207). North wing, east side. This originally had two twin beds, later (after 1977) a "big iron bed" moved from another room. "My dad got upset when they took the big iron bed out of such and such room and put it in [here], because Grandma Lil had it in such and such room."

No. 15 (221-222). "There is no No. 15 because they made bathrooms, a ladies' and a men's bathroom with a sink and toilet and a commode." This change took place in 1961.

No. 16 (206). The last room on the right in the north wing, with two twin beds.

No. 17 (223). On the west side, facing toward the woods, this room had one of the double beds until after 1977 when it became a two-bed room.

No. 18 (224). The next room on the west side also was a double-bed room later changed to a twin-bed room.

No. 19 (225). The last room on the west side, not mentioned by Mrs. Dougherty.

Furnishings. The bedrooms were very simply furnished, with a double or two single beds (four singles in No. 11), a dresser, and a commode or washstand (two in No. 11), probably a chair or two, utility carpeting, and curtains. In place of closets, each room had a shelf and clothes hooks.⁴

At the time the hotel closed in 1986, the bedrooms contained a variety of beds including at least two iron double beds and twin beds in brown metal (fig. 41), wood and brass (fig. 39), and Hollywood-style (fig. 40).⁵

Each room contained a dresser, most with an attached mirror. Most of them were typical oak or mahogany veneered pieces dating back to the 1930s and earlier (figs. 40, 41). Many had been painted white but have been recently stripped and naturally finished. A rustic dresser with mirror, made of cedar and birchbark, is attributed to a local carpenter, Al Fortner. Pieces of this type were used in the hotel bedrooms in the early days, according to Charlie Williams. Of this distinctive furniture only this dresser, a round table, and "Olaf's chair" seem to have survived in the concessioner's collection.⁶

Since there was no indoor plumbing before 1961, every bedroom was supplied with a commode, which held a white china bowl and pitcher for

4. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, pp. 16-17; figures 39-41.

5. Concessioner's collection, Kettle Falls.

6. Family interview, 1987.

washing and, in the cabinet below, a slop pail. All rooms presumably were also equipped with chamber pots. All the surviving commodes are simple oak or maple pieces with wooden knobs (fig. 41). Some of them had been painted white at some time, but these have recently been stripped and naturally finished.⁷

Two of the original washbowl and pitcher sets (damaged) are in storage at Kettle Falls. They are of white semi-porcelain marked E.R.R. Co.

An exterior photograph from about 1920 and several later ones (not illustrated) and figure 39 (1971) show what appear to be sheer curtains in the south bedroom windows. In 1942 (fig. 2) these windows also had striped awnings. Flowered curtains are visible in a 1986 photograph (fig. 41). All windows had white window shades (family comment).

The only evidence on carpeting is a 1986 photograph (fig. 41), which shows wall-to-wall striped carpeting.

The original drop-cord lights stayed in place until 1974. As described in 1978 "the second floor lighting is generally keyless porcelain lamp holders or pull chain lamp holders with bare bulb." A 1977 photograph (fig. 40), however, shows a drum-type fixture with glass diffuser in the owners' room.⁸

Bathrooms. When indoor plumbing was introduced in 1961, room No. 15 was converted into toilets for men and women, each with a water closet, lavatory, and commode. Bathing facilities had been available since

7. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 6; Kimball, "Historic Hotel"; figure 48.

8. HSR, p. 60.

about 1957 in a separate building behind the hotel, later (1972) converted into a sauna. In 1964 an addition was built at the north end of the second floor, containing separate shower rooms for men (205) and women (226), and a vestibule between (203).⁹

Linen Closet (209). This was at the inside corner where the east and north halls meet, adjacent to Room No. 12.¹⁰

9. HSR, p. 43 and illustration on p. 17; June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 17.

10. June Dougherty, interview, 1978, p. 16; HSR, p. 9.

I L L U S T R A T I O N S

Figure 1. Bartenders' picnic at Kettle Falls, 1915. The earliest view of the hotel, shortly after it was completed. Note the unpainted porch and lean-to kitchen.

Collection of Koochiching County Historical Museum, International Falls, MN.



Figure 2. Kettle Falls Hotel, June 1942.

Collection of Norman Selsaas; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 3. East end of porch, June 1942.

Collection of Norman Selsaas; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 4. Porch, looking west, c.1961.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 5. Porch, looking west, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 6. Porch, dining area at east end, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



Figure 7. Lobby, looking south and east, c.1971.

Kent Kobersteen photograph, Minneapolis Tribune Picture Magazine,
March 14, 1971.



Figure 8. Lobby, looking west, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 9. Lobby, looking northwest, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



Figure 10. Lobby, looking northeast, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 11. Lobby, looking southwest, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



Figure 12. Lobby, southwest corner, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 13. Dining room, looking southeast, c.1973-77.

Postcard, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 14. Dining room, looking northeast, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 15. Lil Williams in the kitchen, 1958.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 16. Nora Nilson in the kitchen, 1966.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 17. Kitchen, southwest corner, 1973. The two girls are
preparing to use the Faspray dishwasher.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 18. Lil and Bob Williams, early 1950s, showing enclosed porch, later turned into the auxiliary kitchen.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 19. Blanche Williams (right) with Amy Jameson (left) and Ercel Martinson, a cousin, 1956, standing in front of the auxiliary kitchen and new laundry addition.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 20. Barroom, northwest corner, 1942.

Collection of Koochiching County Historical Museum, International Falls, MN.



Figure 21. Bob Williams behind the bar, c.1950-56.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 22. Barroom, south end, c.1956. Chuck and Mike Williams are
playing bumper pool.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.

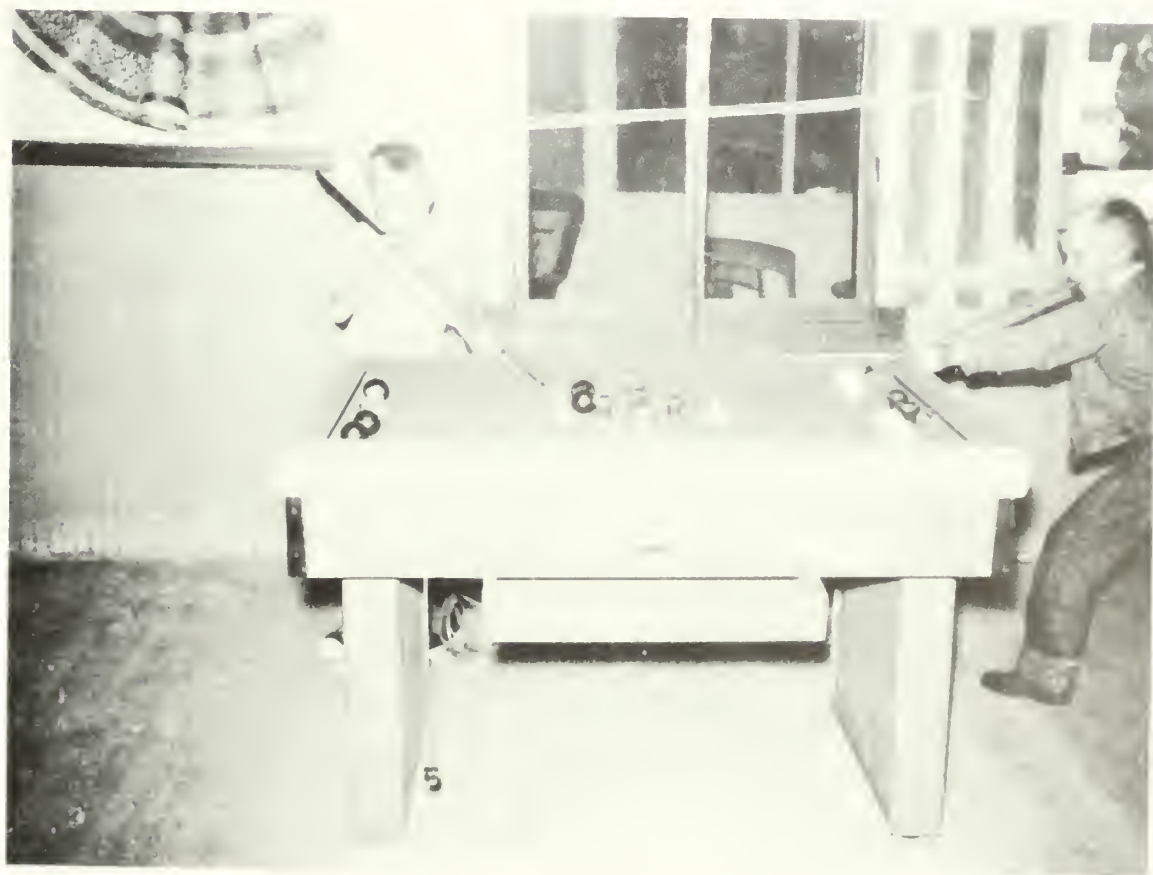


Figure 23. Barroom, north end, 1956. Mrs. Williams identified the couple in the center as Margie and Myron Anderson; the other people are not identified.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 24. Barroom, looking south, c.1961, Charlie Williams tending bar, Fritz Vanderhaas in right foreground, other patrons not identified.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 25. Barroom, northeast corner, 1961, with Dale Williams.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 26. Barroom, north end of bar, 1961. The boys are Mike
Williams (left) and Wayne George.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 27. Barroom, north end, 1961, with Chuck Williams (right), Jim Kirsila, and "Red."

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 28. Barroom, west side, 1961. The patrons, friends of Blanche and Charlie Williams, were (left to right) Speed and Joyce Christianson, Mabel Williams, Margie Anderson, Helen and Sherd Knies, and Herb Williams.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative, Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 29. Barroom, north end of bar, c.1965(?), with Mike Williams.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 30. Charlie and Blanche Williams, 1966, behind the bar.

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Charles R. Williams; copy negative,
Voyageurs National Park.



Figure 31. Barroom, looking northeast, c.1969. The oil stove was replaced with a ceiling-mounted gas unit heater in 1970.

Postcard, Voyageurs National Park collection.



Figure 32. Back bar, 1971, by Kent Kobersteen, illustrating Ron Schara's article, "Out-of-the-way Inn," in Minneapolis Tribune Picture Magazine, March 14, 1971.

Collection of Minneapolis Tribune.



Figure 33. Barroom, looking northeast, mid-1970s, after the ceiling fans were installed (1973).

Postcard, Voyageurs National Park.

Figure 34. Barroom, looking northeast, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



Figure 35. Barroom, looking east, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 36. Barroom, looking southeast, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



Figure 37. Barroom, looking southwest, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.

Figure 38. Barroom, northwest corner, 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



Figure 39. Unidentified bedroom, 1971: "Clean, simple room in the hotel stands ready for summer rush." Kent Kobersteen photograph, illustrating Ron Schara's article, "Out-of-the-way Inn," Minneapolis Tribune, Picture Magazine, March 14, 1971.

Collection of Minneapolis Tribune.



Figure 40. Bedroom No. 5, 1977. Although captioned "Typical Guest Room," this was the room occupied by the hotel operators, Mr. and Mrs. Williams.

From "Historic Structure Report," 1979.

Figure 41. Unidentified bedroom (possibly east end of No. 11), 1986.

Voyageurs National Park photograph.



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